



# SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## The 'Dale Dispatch

September/October 2021

News and reflections from the Superintendent and Cabinet of the Scarsdale Public Schools



### On Home-coming

By Dr. Thomas Hagerman,  
Superintendent of Schools

Dating back over a century, Homecoming is a long-standing, American tradition in which entire communities coalesce around centralizing events that involve food, music, festivities, and sport, namely a big football game with a rival team! What separates homecoming from other sporting events is that it is typically one of the first home games of the year, and, as the name indicates, is intended to welcome back former members of the community for a time of connection and celebration. Not only does it encourage fellowship and camaraderie, but it also creates an intentional cycle for students, teachers, parents, fans, alumni, and community members to come together to honor a school's tradition and history. In doing so, it also creates new memories to be shared with future generations, binding them together in perpetuity.

In an article a few years back, Nick Saban, Head Coach at the University of Alabama noted, "Football is a great example to this country. Football unifies. Football brings people together." This sentiment was certainly exemplified at Scarsdale High School's Homecoming game. By all accounts, it was a very special night: The weather was perfect with a hint of autumn chill. Butler Field was beautifully showcased under its new lights. The Varsity Football team demonstrated incredible skill, determination, and sportsmanship throughout the game, captivating viewers all the way through a nail-biting, 4th quarter. Our Varsity Cheerleading Team used their considerable talent and enthusiasm to support the team, unify the fans, and boost morale for the whole school community. And, our student musicians in the Varsity Band used their individual and collective gifts to create a lively atmosphere, one filled with excitement and jubilation.

It was clear that all the fans--young and old--appreciated the contributions of the many staff and faculty involved in making this not only a wonderful experience for our students, but for the whole school community. Our booster club Maroon & White also deserves our recognition and appreciation for their many, ongoing contributions to our athletic programming across the District, and, of course, specifically for the new Butler Field lights, which would not have been possible without their incredible generosity.

Beyond the power of its individual moments, this year's Homecoming was significant for other reasons too. In its most simple definition homecoming refers to returning to one's home or a place like home. For most students, schools are extensions of home life, and, outside of family relationships, some of the most important interpersonal interactions occur with friends, classmates, teachers, counselors, deans, coaches, and an array of other school folks.

The last year and a half has been exceedingly difficult for our children and youth as they grappled with a host of issues related to anxiety and isolation resulting from Covid-19. In a recent Wall Street Journal article, Ronald E. Dahl, Director of the Institute of Human Development at the University of California, reminds us that our children are at "a pivotal time" in terms of their psychological growth because they are forming longer-term mental

pathways and trajectories, and the ability to construct positive mindsets and develop resilience are critical aspects of this work.

As the community's educators, we recognize our shared responsibility for resetting our students' academic, social, and psychological journeys this year, and we have spent significant time deliberating on how to create intentional spaces that foster catharsis, reestablish norms, create physical and psychological safety, and build community. With these and other supports in place, we are confident that our students will continue to flourish in their classrooms and schools.

Dr. Dahl affirms this belief when he notes, "The good news is that in children this age, troubling trajectories can be relatively easily reversed with positive experiences and by supporting kids through challenges."

While a single homecoming football game may not have the power to transform the lives of our students, it does provide us with an important reminder and positive example of how the entire school community can collectively wrap its arms around our children and youth and affirm our unwavering support of, and commitment to, each of them.



## Developing Leadership During a Pandemic

By Dr. Drew Patrick,  
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources  
& Leadership Development

It is not an exaggeration to say that the past 18 months have generated an unprecedented and previously unimaginable array of challenges within our profession. The extraordinary range of problems to solve, no-good-answer decisions to be made, and relentless waves of change have pushed educators into uncharted professional territory. This pressure-filled period of time has created make-or-break situations for leadership teams across the education sector, conditions that tend to either drive teams apart, or draw them together around common purpose. I am happy to report that this pandemic has brought our administrative team closer together. The 25 assistant principals, principals, and central office administrators who make up the Scarsdale Administrative Council have grown significantly in our ability to collaborate, problem solve, and most importantly, to support the students and staff in our care. One of the reasons for this has been a steadfast commitment to our growth as a team throughout the pandemic.

In September of 2020, after a summer of non-stop meetings and decisions, the District administrative team recognized a shared need to carve out a small block of time each month to learn together. Despite Zoom fatigue, we committed to work virtually with Teachers College Columbia professor [Dr. Ellie Drago-Severson](#), an expert in adult learning and leadership. The purpose of our work with Dr. Drago-Severson was to expand our knowledge and skills around teaming and leading adults through change, and it started with establishing norms for our behavior as a team. We knew that if we were to continue to confront the challenges Covid-19 presented to our mission, we needed a set of ground rules that enabled us to challenge each other, propose unpopular or "crazy" solutions in the face of unique problems, and reach a shared consensus on the very best way forward in each situation while keeping students at the center of our thought and actions. Curiously, the simple act of working together to develop these norms had important side-effects. Our listening skills improved, our trust for one another deepened, and our collective sense of mutual respect was reinforced. Our two hours with Dr. Drago-Severson each month began to take on special meaning, as we allowed ourselves to briefly break from the problems of the day, and emerge from the weight of decision fatigue to learn together as a team. As the year progressed, our work evolved toward the development of individual improvement goals stemming from an experience with the [Immunity to Change](#) protocol, work that continues today.

Last week, we embarked on a second year of this work with Dr. Drago-Severson, this time live and in person! The norms we developed are now a routine feature of each Administrative Council meeting. Armed with these norms, and the agreements and understandings that lie beneath them, our meetings have started to show improvements in effectiveness and efficiency. While specific decisions or outcomes may have ultimately been the same without this structure in place, the process we now use to reach decisions reflects more authentic input, a broader consensus, and a clearer understanding of purpose and intent. Perhaps most importantly, each of us has begun to carry this new learning into our work with the adults we lead throughout the District.

So why does this all matter to the Scarsdale Public Schools? The impact of this pandemic is broad, deep, and in many ways still unknown. The students, families, teachers, teacher aides, support staff, and bus drivers in our care will continue to need support in ways both typical and unique to the circumstances of this pandemic. By deepening our understanding of adult learning and improving our leadership skills, we are better able to coach, problem-solve, innovate, adapt, and change as necessary to meet the needs of our learning community. Each day continues to bring new challenges, but we persevere, engaging with each and every student and staff member as the individual that they are.

## Bridges, Practices, and Evolutions

By Dr. Edgar McIntosh,  
Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

While meeting with a group of educators the other day, a colleague came up with three categories that perfectly described the types of teaching going on during this time of COVID-19 risk mitigation. This colleague, Joe, explained that our current instructional and curricular moves basically fell into three broad classifications: Bridges,



Practices, and Evolutions. Bridges get us over our current obstacles, Practices are effective methods we are still able to use, and Evolutions are the adaptations we've made that have changed the way we approach teaching.

Bridges are helping us "get to the other side" of the pandemic and we welcome the day we can leave them behind. Remote teaching for our youngest students was one of our most challenging bridges. We know that learning is social and often kinesthetic. It's a process that is boosted by 3-dimensional interaction and the subtlety of body language lost on a Zoom screen or a streamed classroom. Through the innovation and tenacity of our educators, this bridge was the best it could be -and effective strategies were developed to meet our students' needs. It's been said many times: there is no substitute for in-person learning. While we are prepared to shift to remote learning if required, we look forward to dismantling this particular bridge.

Our Practices are the essential educational operations that we've been able to continue. Importantly, we have continued to emphasize our connections with students. We have also maintained collaboratively designed learning outcomes, implemented ongoing assessments, given meaningful feedback, set clear objectives, prioritized critical thinking skills, and purposefully built independence, tenacity, perseverance and resilience. The value we place on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has always been an important part of our practice in Scarsdale. This work has been further energized and enriched via expertise from our educators and community, expanding global opportunities, and the adoption of The NYS Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Framework. Our Practices are teaching moves, content emphasis and methods that we will maintain even as masks come off, social distances close, and hand sanitizer stocks plummet.

Evolutions are positive developments that have grown from our challenges. We are more facile with technology - and have come a long way to norm and align our platforms and processes. We have also used and expanded technology in new and innovative ways. While skyping with people wasn't new, we have connected with classrooms, experts, and leaders in meaningful and creative ways across the county and across the world. Our view on assessments also continues to evolve. Where once students might simply 'Google' content information while working from home, we are pushing students towards greater depth and flexibility. "What do you know?" is a less relevant question than "How do you source, synthesize, defend, communicate and apply your knowledge?"

Evolutions also grow from wide, meaningful and diverse collaborations. Through deeply felt needs, our educators find each other, share discoveries, co-design lessons, and swap resources. During that same meeting just the other day, another colleague talked about teachers being thieves - in a most endearing way. "We steal from each other to get better. We see what colleagues are doing and say, "That's amazing, I'll try that too!"

With that final sentiment fresh on my mind, I imagine that stealing the concept of "Bridges, Practices, and Evolutions" from Joe puts me in very good company.



## **Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart**

By Rachel Moseley,  
Director of Information Technology,  
Chief Information and Data Protection Officer

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month. The overarching theme for Cybersecurity Awareness Month 2021 is "Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart."

This is a good time for me to remind all parents and high school students to keep their Campus Portal accounts safe. Login credentials should not be shared with anyone, and guardians should use their own personal user accounts. Parents who are looking for information about how to request a Campus Portal account, should visit <https://www.scarsdaleschools.k12.ny.us/domain/54>.

To keep your children's data protected, please consider the following when choosing a password for your Campus Portal account:

- Choose a password that is at least 10 characters in length
- Choose passwords with phrases that have embedded symbols and numbers
- Use at least three of: alphabetic and numeric characters, upper- and lower-case characters, punctuation, and special characters, such as W3st-Che5ter!
- Don't reuse old passwords or variations of them
- Don't use proper names, parts of your email or name, cities, sports teams, etc.
- Don't use any word from a dictionary
- Don't use common characters sequences such as "123456", mar2020, June1st
- Don't use personal details such as variations of your own name, your spouse's and pet's names, license plate numbers, social security numbers, and birthdates

These password guidelines are also useful when creating passwords for other systems. With internet security breaches happening at an increasing frequency, it's very important to make sure that you are protecting your and your children's personal information by using secure passwords.

Do Your Part to #BeCyberSmart!



## Creating our New Technology Plan

By Jerry Crisci,  
Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation  
Co-Director of the Center for Innovation

This year, we are creating a new Technology Plan that will define our vision and goals for the next three years. The plan will be written and reviewed by the District K-12 technology committee, and will include input from all District stakeholders, including parents and High School students. Then, the plan will be reviewed by colleagues in other school districts, and will be submitted to the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center, where it will receive a final review. The final plan will be presented to the community at the April 25, 2021 Board meeting.

The Technology Plan will feature several focus areas, including the instructional technology curriculum, professional development, digital health and wellness, technology support, and a projected technology budget. Instructional technology expectations, the highlight of the plan, will be reviewed and revised to reflect the latest ideas and trends about using technology to enhance and transform teaching and learning.

The Technology Plan will incorporate the latest International Society for Technology and Education (ISTE) standards, and also use the framework developed by the Consortium for School Networking (COSN). The ISTE standards describe a robust vision of learning that focuses on the many roles of students. Examples of these roles include:

- Empowered Learner
- Knowledge Constructor
- Innovative Designer/Maker
- Computational Thinker

This vision aligns with the work that Scarsdale has been doing to prepare our students for their lives after Scarsdale. The COSN framework provides a comprehensive blueprint for examining a District's technology program.

The first draft of the technology plan will be published this spring, and we will encourage the community to provide feedback on this important document.

In addition, the Technology department is also launching a new District Technology Planning Website to inform the community about our progress on the plan. Stay tuned for more information about this initiative in the next issue of the 'Dale Dispatch.



## Fall Facilities Update

By Stuart Matthey,  
Assistant Superintendent for Business & Facilities

Each fall, we provide the Board of Education and community with an update on facilities projects and repairs. This fall's update includes work we are still finishing as part of the 2018 Bond, along with work that is part of the regular school budget. The full Board update [can be viewed on STV](#).

Let's start with Bond work. Going back to the summer of 2019, work included construction of security vestibules at all the elementary schools, and replacing the aging boilers at the High School. In January, we held the long-awaited ribbon cutting ceremony for Greenacres School, a virtual tour of which can be viewed at [ScarsdaleSchools.org/GreenacresTour](https://ScarsdaleSchools.org/GreenacresTour).

The summer of 2020 brought us heating and ventilation upgrades and increased ADA compliance District-wide, along with work to mitigate flooding issues at Quaker Ridge and the High School. Folding doors were replaced in the gymnasium at the Middle School, a portion of the High School roof was replaced, and Dean Field was renovated. The field will be ready for use this upcoming spring!

This past summer saw extensive roof work and brick repointing occur at Edgewood, Quaker Ridge and the Middle School. Security was also improved through the addition of new cameras inside and outside the Middle and High Schools. More work is planned for next summer, including electrical panel upgrades at Heathcote, Quaker Ridge, the Middle School and High School, Unit Ventilator replacement at Quaker Ridge, the Middle School and the High School, and a new boiler and gymnasium HVAC at Heathcote. Plans for that work are currently being finalized.

There were also non-bond construction and improvements which took place this summer, such as new LED lighting at Edgewood and Fox Meadow. This work was completed far under budget because we purchased the equipment directly through a state contract. This strategy led to project completion at roughly 25% of the cost initially budgeted for this work!

At Heathcote, aging doors are being replaced, exterior lighting will be installed, and a number of access bility improvements are being made. These projects have been delayed due to Covid-related factors, but progress is being made nonetheless.

New carbon monoxide detectors were installed District-wide. The new detectors are integrated with school security systems. In the past, one would need to be near a detector that is alarming in order to hear it. The integration with our improved security system can trigger school wide alarms, protecting children and staff who are at risk but not within earshot.

There were also renovations to the Bus Compound, which hasn't been renovated in decades. The work includes moving Transportation Supervisor Gerson Katuemutima's office to the compound from the Business Office, enabling him to be closer to his team.

The final remaining major piece of renovation approved as part of the 2020-21 Budget is to complete renovations of the High School auditorium. Work includes stage rigging and safety improvements, sound system improvements including assistive listening technology, electrical and theatrical wiring upgrades, motorized winches/controls for theatrical lighting line sets, along with new storage and backstage lighting.

The final scope of the Auditorium project is scheduled for 2022, and includes removal and replacement of auditorium seating, catering, and repair to the underlying concrete. Replacement and refinishing of the stage flooring and improvements to lighting are also included at this point.

Many people are aware that Butler Field was damaged during Hurricane Ida. Short term repairs have been made to ensure the field is playable through sectional playoffs, but more investigation is needed to determine the root cause of drainage issues. This will likely require pulling back the turf, and will occur after the fall athletic season ends.

Installation of the sound system gift from Maroon & White is also moving along. Installation plans are being finalized, and a strategy has been coordinated with the architects, electricians and sound consultants to ensure it can be installed properly, and as soon as possible although equipment delays are expected.

In all, projects are complete or moving forward, despite the supply chain issues facing every industry. We thank the Scarsdale Community for their ongoing commitment to the maintenance and improvement of our over 1 million square feet of instructional space.